

Remarks

This Amendment is responsive to the Office Action mailed on March 23, 2006. Entry of this Amendment and reconsideration of the instant application in view of the above amendments and following remarks are respectfully requested.

Claims 5-8 are pending. Claims 1-4 and 9-10 are withdrawn. Claims 11-23 have been added to further define the invention. No new matter has been added.

The Examiner has required restriction to one of: Group I, claims 1-4, Group II, claims 5-8, and Group III, claims 9-10. Applicants provisionally elect Group II with traverse.

Restriction is proper only for "independent" inventions, i.e., those which are "unconnected in design, operation or effect." MPEP § 802.01. Applicants assert that the claims of Groups II and III are not independent inventions. Claims 5-8 disclose a curable clay composition made by the method and claims 9-10 disclose a method for preparing a curable clay composition of claims 5-8. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that the election of species requirement be withdrawn.

This Paper is believed to be timely filed and that no additional fees are due. However, if any additional fee is deemed required for consideration of this Response, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge such fee to Deposit Account No. 18-1850.

Respectfully submitted,



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